The other side of a magic mirror

The other side of a magic mirror: Exploring collegiality in student and staff partnership work

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Abstract

This article adds to the corpus of writing that examines collegiality's idealistic yet elusive nature in Higher Education by focusing specifically on how collegiality can be enacted in student-staff partnership work. An innovative initiative, 'Students as Colleagues in the Review of Teaching Practices', provides a case to qualitatively explore the collegial characteristics. Here, students reviewed a paired staff member's teaching practice over one semester, as a peer review exercise. This shift in social roles troubles the understanding of 'peer', and asks if authentic collegiality is possible. The study is conceptually framed by Fielding's notion of 'radical collegiality', and draws on

standpoint theory and dialogic education to raise issues of power, mutual support, and productive tensions. The findings have implications for how Higher Education institutions can support student and staff to actively engage in authentic collegial partnerships by developing relational and dialogic spaces, rather than just abstract institutional infrastructures.

Keywords: radical collegiality, partnership, standpoint theory, dialogue, peer review.

Introduction

> I felt like I got to see the other side of a magic mirror, the side of teaching that's normally hidden from you (Sarah, student).

Upon the foundation of student engagement stands a sprawling structure of words and actions. One can easily get lost, through artifice or ignorance. There are labyrinthine procedural corridors, housing ever more prescriptive ways of engaging students in formal committees and processes. There are play areas, sometimes sumptuously furnished, to provide distractions from the business of learning. And there are elaborate Potemkin villages, erected to convince students, staff and perhaps the architects themselves that true engagement is occurring (Dwyer 2018). It is not surprising that some are tempted to shut the door on the whole edifice (e.g., Zipke 2015).

There are rooms, however, where the trust and respect necessary for joyful transformations in student-staff partnerships can be found. While such euphoric language seems suspect in our wearily consumerist age, this paper describes stumbling into such a space, and how the notion of collegiality was key in helping us to find it.

Set against a backdrop of students as partners work (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten 2014; Healey, Flint, and Harrington 2014; Matthews 2016), we present findings from a project that asked if staff and students could enter genuine collegial relationships

which fostered authentic professional development. 'Students as Colleagues in the Review of Teaching Practices' (SaC) was initially conducted as a pilot over one academic year at a modern university in Scotland. Student volunteers were recruited to act as advisors and evaluators of learning and teaching practices and were paired with willing staff members to undertake a peer review exercise. While separate papers describe the design and implementation (Green and Scoles, 2016) and outcomes (Huxham et al 2017) of the project, the development of genuinely collegiate student-staff relationships warrants its own investigation considering recent student partnership literature.

While collegiality is heralded as a distinctive and symbolic core value of higher education (HE) and of the academic profession (Macfarlene 2016), its meaning is ambiguous. The operation and implications of collegiality have been researched in schools (e.g., Harris and Anthony, 2001; Hargreaves and Dawe 1990; Little 1990; Fielding, 1999) and HE (e.g., Macfarlane 2016; Burnes, Wend and By 2014; Kligate and Barrie 2014; Tapper and Palfreyman 2010). Here, we are concerned with how collegiality is enacted when students and staff act as partners.

We draw on the ideas of radical collegiality (Fielding 1999), feminist standpoint theory (Harding 1993) and dialogic education (Wegerif 2013). The parallels between feminist theory and student partnership work have been highlighted by Mercer-Mapstone and Mercer (2017, 1), who discuss how both fields draw on "similar radical processes of challenging, questioning, destabilising, deconstructing, and empowering". Fielding (1999) suggests collegiality may be 'radical' when it genuinely challenges and subverts accepted power relationships and forms of student-teacher interaction. This approach not only secures authentic learning, it also has an explicitly political goal: "it is through radical collegiality that one upholds democratic community" (Fielding 1999,

29). In the context of student partnership work, achieving this transformation would be "deeply demanding of change" (Cliffe et al 2017, 4). Standpoint theory and dialogic education offer conceptual mechanisms and justifications for supporting this transformation to radical collegiality.

Furthermore, through understanding collegiality as based on an ethic of reciprocity (Cook-Sather and Felten 2017), we highlight the importance of dialogic education (Wegerif 2013, 3) through which students are drawn into dialogues "in an ultimately unbounded context". In the context of SaC, 'student' should be understood as both the student and staff member as they are both positioned as learners in this initiative.

Wary of falling into the trap of "ventriloquising" (Macfarlane 2016, 33) collegiality, students and staff worked closely together to analyse how collegiality was enacted in student-staff partnerships. Thus, students and staff are co-authors of this paper. This "students as researchers" (e.g., Healy and Jenkins 2009, Lambert 2009) element further embeds a democratic approach that underscores genuine collegiality in academic practice.

Background: Peer Review and Students as Partners work

Peer review was selected as a context in which to explore collegiality in students as partners work for multiple reasons. Firstly, peer review has long been recognised as a powerful stimulant for reflection and personal development. It is practiced throughout HE and has clear benefits when conducted well (Hendry and Oliver 2012). For example, peer evaluation was one marker of collegiality in exemplary academic departments in Massy, Wilger and Colbreck's (1994) study of 20 US colleges and universities. However, true collegiality is difficult to establish and is often absent in practice (Iqbal

2014).

Secondly, peer review is regularly seen as part of a suite of quality assurance processes that do not always acknowledge the influence of power differentials. In the UK, the QAA's Code for Higher Education Part B (2012, 5) stipulates that, "All students should have the opportunity to be involved in quality enhancement and assurance processes in a manner and at a level appropriate to them". Perhaps in response, some peer review processes attempt to indirectly incorporate a student perspective. For example, Kenny et al (2014, 220) asked lecturers to act as a classroom participant, "participating with students in the lesson of a colleague". This attempt to place the lecturer in "the student's shoes" is commendable. However, the lecturers are still required to do the imaginative work for the students, which indicates space for deeper student engagement.

Thirdly, the very nature of conducting a review raises issues of power and expertise. When students are invited into the evaluative arena, traditional expectations of who is the expert are challenged. Some authors question whether students possess the relevant experience, or indeed intellect, to effectively contribute. Bingham and Ottewell (2001, 32) cite Clouder's assertion that student evaluation is "…dependent upon and limited by the student's level of intellectual development at the time of the evaluation of the learning experience". They argue that if student views are to be considered, they should be tempered by contributions from other stakeholders, "in particular tutors, whose professional judgement deserve recognition" (33). These assertions could stem from issues of trust, or lack of, in students being able to articulate their own views as part of a wider dialogue (Cook-Sather 2002; Werder and Skogsberg 2013).

While we do not deny the relevance of lecturers' or educational developers' expertise in the evaluation of teaching, we do argue that students should be considered

genuine authorities. After all, students are the experts in being students, at any particular moment in time (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten 2014). Quantitative work on SaC showed that, properly supported, students gave feedback to staff that rivalled or surpassed that provided by academic peers (Huxham et al., 2017). We need to recognise that students have epistemic salience, and that they "should not just input into the system, they should be an active part of the system by working together with staff in developing and implementing solutions because students are experts in their student experience" (Neary 2013, 591).

Fourthly, we wanted to explore ways to challenge the shift from collegiality to managerialism and neoliberalism in the culture of university life (Macfarlane 2016). Zipke (2015, 697) argues there is a strong "elective affinity" between student engagement work and neoliberalism, with concerns about performativity and an educational market being prioritised. We fear that this justified suspicion could lead staff to reject student engagement approaches that challenge the managerialism he excoriates, in particular those drawing on Fielding's radical collegiality. As Buckley (2018, 729) states, in a riposte to Zepke, "any literature on student participation in decision-making that substantially relies on… Fielding contains an ideological opposition to neoliberal approaches to higher education".

Lastly, few of the growing number of projects that include students as partners in the evaluation of learning and teaching practices (e.g. Crawford 2012; Cook-Sather 2009) explicitly involve students in multiple evaluative activities. For example, Jensen and Bennet (2016) report that students and staff moved towards a focus on lectures in their review of teaching. In stipulating a range of teaching practices (including online spaces) to examine, we resist the tendency of peer review exercises to solely focus on lecture observation (Gosling & Mason O'Connor 2009).

Conceptual underpinning: Exploring radical collegiality and standpoint theory

Tapper and Palfreyman (2010, 17) claim that collegiality is foundational for a university: "it is the embodiment of the idea of collegiality that distinguishes a university from an institution of higher education as simply a managed machine for teaching at the tertiary level". However, current discussions of the topic often lament its demise (Kligyte and Barrie 2014; Freeman 2013). Others argue that 'collegiality' is often seen as an ideal (MacFarlane 2016), has a 'golden age' mythic quality (Tight 2010), or acts as a 'subliminal fantasy' (Kligyte and Barrie 2014). Massy, Wilger and Colbreck (1994, 12, 19) describe the enactment of "hollowed collegiality" used to "dodge fundamental questions of task." This "veneer of civility" simply allows uncomfortable discussions to be avoided.

In his thesis on radical collegiality, Fielding (1999) makes the distinction between collaboration and collegiality. Whilst the former may simply be a process of pursuing self interest in tandem with others - "a plural form of individualism" - the latter involves commitment to higher, collective purposes (Fielding 1999, 5). He defines collegiality as: "both communal in its ontology and other-regarding in its centre of interpersonal attention: collegiality's conceptual preferences valorise individuality over individualism and community over contract" (6). Yet the term 'collaboration' is often used in student partnership scholarship to signify a joint endeavour (e.g., Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten 2014; Jensen and Bennett 2015; Matthews 2016). We argue that Fielding's definition can help student-staff partnerships extend beyond collaboration and engender greater collective good, even if it means confronting uncomfortable situations.

Fielding (1999) offers three principles that promote and embed radical collegiality as a dialogic process:

1. To recognise that professional teachers can learn from not only their peers, but also from their students (as well as parents and the community)

2. This learning should not be left to chance but actively encouraged and the agentic capacity of all those involved should be explicitly acknowledged

3. Reciprocity is a central element to this learning, which forms the foundations of an increasingly authentic democracy.

SaC responds to these principles, and answers Fielding's (2004, 309) call that, "we need new opportunities for dialogic encounter".

To help conceptualise 'radical collegiality' in student partnership work, we draw on standpoint theory. Huxham et al (2017) argue that standpoint theory (e.g., Harding, 1993) complements the notion of radical collegiality in arguing for an explicitly political and social epistemology. Whilst most compellingly developed in cases of the gross abuse of power (such as slavery), feminist authors have used the theory as a more general lens through which to view society. Standpoint theory is not as simple as acknowledging that different people have different perspectives, but rather that in strongly hierarchical systems those who are subject to arbitrary power have unique and more perceptive insights into the workings of the system. In such hierarchies, the 'oppressed' may be positioned as "epistemically privileged" (Rolin 2006). This is not a matter of 'better' or 'worse' knowledge, but of 'situated knowledge', where what "individuals experience and understand is shaped by their location in a hierarchically structured system [university] of power relations" (Wylie 2003, 31). For example, Cook-Sather (2002, 5) reminds us that, "students are differently knowledgeable about

the range of new modes of communication and uses for education than the teachers and educational researchers who work with them."

We are not arguing that students are necessarily 'oppressed'. However, most universities are strongly hierarchical places and *structural* oppression - where tokenistic student engagement initiatives may continue to position students as 'objects', while staff remain 'subjects'- is common. Drawing on bell hooks' (1989, 43) work, even with the best intentions to champion the student's perspective (e.g., Kenny et al 2014), "as long as their authority is constituted by the absence of the voices of the individuals whose experience they seek to address… the subject-object dichotomy remains and domination is reinforced". Therefore, we argue that aspects of standpoint theory, such as the notion of epistemic privilege, have relevance in HE, and in particular, student partnership work (Mapstone-Mercer and Mercer, 2017).

Methodological approach

SaC was promoted as a voluntary initiative, open to all staff members (not just full-time academics), and unconnected to any performance review or management accountability, in line with Gosling's (2002) developmental model of peer review. Students from first year undergraduate to postgraduate were invited to participate through campus-wide advertising of the initiative. In the application process, students were asked to state three positive personal outcomes anticipated as a result of participation, in order to appraise their motivation for applying, and to identify "what might be the worst thing to happen as a result of your participation?". To minimise conflicts of interest, students were paired with staff from different disciplines, and 18 such pairs were supported in the first year.

Formal training in evaluation and giving feedback approaches for both staff and students was provided by an academic developer (JS). Our aim was to better enable

participants to articulate their already valuable perspectives, rather than instruct them in what to say. There is a danger in such training of inadvertently flattening out difference, of diluting the student identity by leading volunteers too rapidly towards the status of 'peers', equipped with academic language and attitudes. In the thinking of the educationalist John MacMurray, doing this would risk creating 'functional' rather than 'personal' relationships (see Fielding 2012, p 688-689 for a full discussion of these ideas). The former involve relating to people according to their roles and identities and for narrowly instrumentalist purposes, obviating the chance for radical collegiality. Hence, we were careful to emphasise the importance of differences and the value of students' own perspectives.

The review exercises extended beyond lecture observations to include reviews of labs, workshops, VLE online materials, tutorials, and so on. Students also conducted focus groups with the staff member's students to collect more rounded evaluations. Throughout the project, JS acted as a facilitator, acting as an intermediary between staff and students, assisting with review activity scheduling, and organising data collation (see Green and Scoles 2016).

As well as completing feedback forms for the review exercises and being encouraged to meet regularly to discuss the evaluative exercises, at the end of the project, student-staff pairs engaged in one-to-one, semi-structured debrief interviews. They used prompt questions as a guide and their conversations were recorded digitally. 15 interviews were completed: one pair could not complete the review exercises due to timetabling issues, and two pairs failed to meet.

Four research focus groups were also conducted; two at the mid-point of the project, and two at the end of the project. The student and staff member from each pair were invited to different focus groups to encourage participants to speak more freely.

The focus groups lasted between 45 – 90 minutes, were voice recorded and transcribed verbatim into four interview transcripts. Finally, staff and students were encouraged to keep reflective diaries throughout the project. Three staff members and three students opted to do this, along with JS.

In summary, the qualitative data collected for this study consisted of 18 responses from student application questions, four transcripts of focus groups, six written reflective diaries, and transcripts of the 15 debrief interviews. The project gained full ethical approval from the university's Ethics Committee.

Analysis

The research group (and paper co-authors) comprised two staff members (MH and JS), and four students who had participated in the project and volunteered as co-researchers. The students attended several workshops designed to introduce research methods, qualitative analysis and the academic publication process. Inviting students as co-researchers preserved the authenticity and standpoint of the student voice when negotiating with staff members during the analysis of transcripts.

Each interview and focus group transcript, diary entry, and application question responses were independently reviewed by at least two members of the research team. To support the students in this process, and to increase reliability of the analysis, each researcher analysed the transcripts using prompts, which included questions such as 'what is the key theme emerging in this transcript?', and 'what are the sub-themes and quotes to back this up?'. Co-researcher students did not analyse their own transcripts and pseudonyms replaced all names. We used thematic analysis with iterative rounds of discussion, comparison and further refinement of themes that characterised the data as a

whole (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Four main themes emerged, which are explored below.

Findings

Building relationships

We found a repeated emphasis on the centrality and importance of relationship-building between the pairs. For both parties, there was a general pattern of moving from anxiety to confidence in their relationships, with students and staff reflecting on how nervous they were before the first meeting. Students were initially anxious that their feedback would appear shallow, or they would be dismissed on the basis of being 'just' a student. Once the pairs had met though, they all seemed to quickly feel at ease. In her reflective diary, Lucy (student) noted how she often felt "relaxed" and "comfortable", that she felt "part of a team".

The relationships sometimes developed into informal friendships:

> I can speak to her about anything, and as well as talking about the project roles, we also talk about other things happening in life and it's really nice. I've never felt like that she's made me feel like a student. (, student, Final focus group).

Others engaged in a more formal professional relationship, perhaps less as a response to student-teacher dynamic but more for the reasons of being the evaluator and the evaluated:

> I think both of us deliberately kept a bit of space…I mean I absolutely know if I bumped into her in [the street] we could happily stand and chat and catch up and maybe have a coffee, but I think we both definitely drew a line. (Emma, student, final focus group)

Another student, Maria, described it as "a friendship and not a friendship", where:

> you start off talking about one thing and end up just talking about council tax, cats, all sorts of things, the conversation just moves, but you are also aware that it is temporary to the work that needs done.

Whatever the nature of the relationship, the practices of 'meeting' through engaged dialogue - be it via email or Skype, or face-to-face over coffee or in a classroom - emerged as a key factor in developing successful relationships, as Emma (student), describes:

> it's [relationship] been developing as we go along as we have been touching base, face to face, sometimes its' been 5 minutes, sometimes it's been 15 minutes if there's anything more substantial to chat about. (Mid-point focus group)

Mutual support and collective benefit

Both parties had something that the others wanted from the relationship in order to develop professionally and personally. Students were often explicit about skills they hoped to develop for their CVs and future careers:

> For me I have an opportunity to network with people who are doing one of the jobs I would like to do and look behind the screens of how that is achieved. Often students don't fully understand what it takes to get a lecture or a tutorial prepared to the standard that it is. (Maria, student, application response)

Staff recognised that an authentic student perspective on their teaching could provide insights that went beyond peer review:

> I was surprised how detailed and how much depth you put into [your feedback] … yours was completely different [from peers' feedback] because you focused it from multiple perspectives. (Angus, staff, debrief interview)

As Josh (student) summed up, “We are here for mutual benefit; we are on the same team and working together, listening to each other”, and as Meghan (staff), remarked of her relationship with her student, “This is like a mutual appreciation society”.

However, participants also saw their relationships in the broader context of benefiting University life, for others as well as themselves; they wanted to enact democratic collegiality not simply collaboration:

> I think it's a great way to be able to challenge a lecturer to perhaps change their teaching style slightly but also a great way to actually congratulate some techniques they do use! It's not often you do both with one lecturer. You complain in secret or only congratulate if it has been spectacular. But each is equally important to everyone… I think it's great to be a part of something that can promote a change and perhaps help both students and teachers in their development. (Josh, application response, student)

For the participating students, SaC provided the opportunity to open up the black box of teaching and learning practices; to see ‘the other side of the magic mirror’, in Sarah’s words. Students often view teaching practices as opaque and the lecturer as an institutional functionary. When the lecturers shared stories about their own professional development and concern for continuous improvement, this invited students into a shared understanding of vulnerabilities and motivations and helped emphasise the importance that participating staff gave to teaching well. The public nature of the SaC process, in which an invited student was present in the class room and interviewed students during the focus group, communicated concern for teaching to the students who experienced the evaluated teaching:

> Students noted that it was evident how much he [staff member] cared about his teaching ability and were impressed by his desire to improve through Students as Colleagues. Students believed that caring about his teaching in this way revealed how much he cares about his students, and this fact encouraged their learning and

> made them more willing to engage with the material. (Patrick, student, in feedback notes to staff colleague)

Emerging moments of professionalism and responsibility

At the start of the project, students feared that their opinions might not be valued. This was captured in their application responses to the second question: "the worst thing that could happen is that the lecturer would not take me seriously or take things personally" (Beth, student). However, they were hopeful that their voice had a place within the development of teaching and learning practices. Participating staff members realised key moments of emerging professionalism when they began to respond to students' feedback efforts as genuine engagement. When students realised that their comments were being taken seriously, they expressed open delight:

> I couldn't believe how much genuine delight and pleasure I got when my lecturer actually made the changes on Moodle that I recommended after two sessions, and I was just thrilled to bits. (Emma, mid-point focus group)

> To see that actually being implemented and taken on a board from a student, it was very satisfying. (Sophie, mid-point focus group)

Being in an evaluative role promoted professional capacities needed for the workplace:

> I feel it would be a great opportunity for me to develop my confidence as a professional as well as a student. The project will allow me to learn how develop a professional relationship with the lecturer I am assigned to and transfer those skills to my future career. (Sophie, application response, student)

We also found that responsibility emerged as a marker of professionalism, in the sense that most of the students developed concerns beyond the individual; that the way

they acted had an impact on others. Interestingly, it was the student researchers who first explicitly labelled this characteristic as 'responsibility', during the design of an academic poster (Speirs, Welsh, Jung and Scoles, 2015), presented at the QAA 2015 conference:

> In order to become colleagues and conduct these review exercises, students had to develop themselves, overcome new challenges, and take responsibility. We see the acceptance of responsibility here as:
> 1. Responsibility for our **relationships**.
> 2. Responsibility for our **environment**.
> 3. Responsibility for **what we say and do**.

The students sensed the weight of this responsibility, and were acknowledging that, to act professionally in the evaluative exercises, required them to develop new and challenging skills:

> I think until someone is actually in the position where they are sat in front talking to their lecturer, and actually giving them constructive feedback, that's actually quite a big thing to do, and how you frame that up, and how you approach it, takes an awful lot of thinking about before you even get in the room. (Emma, student, mid-point focus group)

This notion of responsibility disrupts the ideology of student as consumer and repositions them as active agents responsible not only for themselves but for their institution and wider academic community.

Disrupting social roles

From the outset, students and staff recognised the implicit hierarchy in their relationship and understood one aim of this project was to disrupt, or at least complicate, this hierarchy. The students talked about establishing "a more equal footing without feeling

inadequate" (Beth), "break[ing] down the communication barrier" (Cara), and developing "a professional relationship" (Sophie).

In doing so, the assumed positions of staff/student were blurred. One staff member felt that they were not pulling their weight as much as the student in the relationship:

> I was probably the one thin on the ground because I was just so busy with other things. So I felt I didn't give enough time to my student. She did all the meetings, she did all the promoting and I was appearing, usually late. (Rod, final focus group)

Another staff member reflected on the importance of treating the student as a colleague and not one of his students on his course:

> Looking at it critically I didn't push it, I wasn't like, 'where are you?', 'how are you getting on with this?'. I sent the odd email to see how things were going to arrange meetings, but I felt it was a bit of an imposition to step over and treat it as a bit of coursework, because that would have changed it entirely'. (Matt, staff, final focus group)

As Emma summed-up in the mid-point focus group, "the whole point of this is we step into a new space together", and navigating this space required both students and staff to negotiate and redefine their understandings of who the 'expert' was, and what this meant for of their roles.

Discussion

Our study explored how collegiality was enacted in practice during student partnership work. We found four key themes that shaped this collegiality: building relationships; mutual support and collective benefit; emerging moments of professionalism and responsibility; and disruption of social roles. The following discussion draws on these

themes to offer suggestions for enhancing radical collegiality in student partnership initiatives.

Embracing the diversity of different perspectives

Wary of *accommodation,* in which student partnership initiatives simply serve "to include them [students] in existing conversations within existing power structures" (Fielding 2004, 297), we designed SaC to genuinely authorise students' perspectives to permit change (Cook-Sather 2002). As a result, we saw collegial relationships forming not in spite of, but in appreciation of, different understandings of expertise.

Cook-Sather's (2015) work on diversity warns of the tendency to conflate student and staff perspectives. Along with Cook-Sather, we argue that the different actors in the relationships should hold controversies open and learn from them. This may be uncomfortable at times but can penetrate the 'veneer of civility' (Massy, Wilger and Colbreck 1994) to allow for more genuine relationships. Ultimately, it is these riskier relationships that will enhance teaching and learning practices, as Cook-Sather (2015, 30) highlights in her exploration of difference in student and faculty's position, perspective and identity:

> the deeper connections, the willingness to complicate, the commitment to better understand, the openness to risking revision and change, and yet the understanding that total understanding is impossible – these capacities and insights are developed through discovering and engaging with differences.

Viewed through the lens of standpoint theory, student-staff partnership projects such as SaC can harness these different perspectives to provide unique insights into teaching and new resources for learning.

Standpoint theory's strength is to invite historically silenced perspectives and the narratives of marginalised groups. Such insights are critical (and are often critically

missing) in understanding the operations of hierarchically ordered social structures (e.g., bell hooks, 1989). In some instances, this negotiation of perspective, and expertise, can be painful and difficult, and can result in combative dialogue where collegiality between participants may be unachievable and there is refusal, by one side or the other, to recognise the legitimacy of each perspective. In attempts to achieve collegiality, there may be painful histories of oppression that need to be considered and negotiated within the relationships; this may be particularly true in settings where social inequalities are or have recently been particularly stark. Key to this negotiation being successful, we argue, is the need to curate a space for dialogue, which is shaped by values of trust and respect, and this fostering of trust lies at the heart of the voluntary approach of SaC.

Establishing genuine dialogue

An emphasis on trust and respect clearly emerged here as foundational to genuine dialogue. In discussing what makes students recognise teachers as 'authentic', Brookfield (2006, 74) writes that it is the teachers who, "… are trustworthy, open and honest in their dealings with students. They are viewed as allies in learning because they clearly have the students' interests at heart and wish to see them succeed." In a collegial student-staff relationship, we need to take this alliance a step further: staff also need to trust that the students have their interests at heart, and that they are being honest and open when providing evaluative feedback.

It was clear that, in some cases, participants in the programme enrolled mainly to enhance their skills, to gain immediate and specific feedback on aspects of their teaching, or to use their experience as evidence of CPD. Where both partners achieved these goals, they were involved in successful collaboration (in Fielding's sense). However, we were genuinely surprised that collaboration often developed into authentic

collegiality. Hence, even where partners start from very different and transactional perspectives, space for dialogue allowed a collegial alliance to emerge.

Such an alliance enacts an ethic of reciprocity (Cook-Sather and Felten 2017). Here, the student takes on responsibility to deliver constructive evaluations while the staff member takes on responsibility to learn. This relational, dialogic approach foregrounds a "shared responsibility and joint ownership for teaching, learning, and assessment" (Matthews 2017, 2). Some authors have suggested that such a reciprocal ethic may be culturally bounded, and not always relevant to non-Anglophone cultural contexts (see Green, 2019). While we acknowledge that, in common with all educational constructs, the understanding and enactment of the idea of 'students as partners' is influenced by cultural and linguistic context, there is growing evidence of genuine student-staff collegiality in non-Anglophone cultures (e.g., Kaur, Awang-Hashim, and Kaur, 2019; Pounder, Ho, and Groves, 2015).

Green (2019) highlights that, even though the term 'partnership' may conjure different semantic meanings in other countries, the ethos of partnership, or in our case, collegiality, is still present but expressed in different linguistic terms. For example, in attending workshops in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Green found that the Māori concept of 'manaakitanga' is similar to 'partnership', and she cites the Secondary School Curriculum Guides (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2011) description of manaakitanga as related to "values of integrity, trust, sincerity, and equity. Through manaakitanga, the teacher and fellow students recognise and affirm the identity of each student in open and trusting relationships" (para. 1). Again, the emphasis in this ethos is the development of connection through building *relationships.*

Werder and Skogsberg (2013, 143) recommend that staff, "enter into dialogue with students as a relational dynamic, not simply as a way of talking and listening, but

as a way of building human connections with each other and with knowledge itself". This draws clear parallels with the notion of dialogic education, where dialogue becomes the vehicle for "shared enquiry and shared thinking rather than just sharing feelings and sharing information" (Wegerif 2013, 14). Whilst the students did share 'information' (their completed feedback forms), this served as the launchpad for shared thinking; a dialogic experience. Wegerif points out that dialogic education extends beyond just dialogues with others in present time; it is also about participating in 'the longer time dialogue of the culture' (4). Training for students that responds to their individual needs is essential if they are to feel comfortable entering into this culture; they must have sufficient knowledge about peer review and learning and teaching practices. In line with Fielding's conceptual values of collegiality, individuality is thus upheld without resorting to individualism.

Opening more than office doors

Developing relationships was an explicit focus of project design and implementation and the data revealed how fundamental good relationships were to the success of the project. As Felten et al (2016, 5) stress, 'relationships matter'. As with Fielding's (1999) third characteristic of radical collegiality, they state that the development of these relationships should not be left to chance but should be 'cultivated and nurtured intentionally at all levels' (6). Thus, while the richness of the outcome depends on the transformative value of the relationship, attention needs to be given to how these relationships can be facilitated and supported.

Drawing on mentoring literature, Cox's (2005, 412) research showed that a 'spark' of spontaneity is often needed as a catalyst for a successful mentoring relationship. Yet this spark "is not achieved by attempts at matching, but by training the new mentor in how to recognise and build on that serendipity which ensures that rapport

and empathy is generated." Key to this is an opening up of spaces, intellectually, physically, and emotionally.

Some have spoken about student-staff consultations creating a 'liminal space' (Dwyer 2018; Jenson and Bennet 2015; Cook-Sather and Alter 2011) in which students (and staff) can exist betwixt and between their traditional roles. However, this terminology may misconstrue this social space as being created *a priori,* ready to be stepped in to. We contend that it emerges in practice – anew each time and in different ways - through "the underlying dialogic gap" (Wegerif 2013, 4). This gap creates a "dialogic space" where different perspectives are held together in a creative tension. Wegerif argues that this gap opens up a new space of meaning, which inhabits an 'inside' space where "dialogues establish their own space and time."

A focus on a dialogic gap foregrounds the power of dialogue in disrupting the traditional monologic exercise of power between student and staff. Relating to standpoint theory, it is through this dialogic gap that a new standpoint may emerge. Importantly, this standpoint has not been assumed (simply due to the student being in a different social location) but "*achieved* through a critical conscious reflection on the way in which power structures and resulting social locations influence knowledge production" (Intemann 2010, 785).

In considering physical space, the conventional corridors and doors of institutional architecture can create a physical barrier to student and staff relationship development. As we found, pairs often bumped into each other in communal spaces and started to chat, such as in the coffee shop. Felten et al (2016) point to a university in Virginia, USA that has created casual outdoor gathering spaces around campus, where students and staff are encouraged to meet and spend time talking on rocking chairs. They note that, "careful design like this can make a world of difference in

communicating the personal relationships in the collegiate experience" (60). This brings us to the final discussion point, concerning the emotional spaces of collegiality.

Recognising the emotional impact of evaluative partnership work

Can a peer review exercise still be perceived as valid when it is experienced as fun and enjoyable? Whilst a cynic might infer this implies that uncomfortable issues were avoided, such a conclusion is not supported by our data. More than 30 years ago, Tinto (1987) found that successful student engagement was linked to intellectual, social and emotional well-being. Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2014) cite a psychological framework to explain that "shared emotional connection" (p. 28) is an essential element in partnerships. Indeed, Fielding (2004, 296) uses euphoric language in describing radical collegiality as 'an explicitly intended and joyfully felt mutuality'. Hence enjoyment in these settings can embrace challenge and does not imply shallow satisfaction. However, the emotional appreciation of student engagement work is still undervalued in scholarship (Felten 2017).

During SaC, staff participants reported talking more openly with their student colleague than with their academic peers, especially once trust had been established within their relationship (Huxham et al., 2017). Many students used strongly emotive language about their experiences. The focus here on the student-staff pairing seemed to encourage a mentoring relationship reflecting Cook-Sather and Felten's (2017) ethic of reciprocity with benefits to both parties. Like Felten (2017), we contend that emotional considerations of student-staff relationships are fundamental in structuring meaningful relations and interaction, and should be explored in scholarly academic text rather than side-lined in personal reflections and essays. We argue that projects such as SaC should place emotions at the centre of building and supporting collegial relationships.

Conclusion

The SaC project facilitated meaningful relationships between students and staff, allowing genuine dialogue about teaching and learning to emerge and leading to mutual support, developing professionalism, and practical changes. Opening up spaces for students and staff to engage in dialogue and to see 'the other side of the mirror' risks vulnerability but also promises excitement, exhilaration and joy.

To enact authentic student partnership professional development activities in learning and teaching, students' epistemic salience has to be respected. Fielding, Wegerif and Cook-Sather all emphasise that the act of dialogue is only meaningful when difference is legitimated. In supporting the recognition of difference, tensions and the resulting dialogic gap, new standpoints can be created and harnessed. This understanding of learning in partnership argues for a move from collaboration to collegiality, or radical collegiality, as it has an explicitly social and political goal. To nurture a culture that focuses on relationship-building, we argue that collegiality in student-staff partnerships should be underpinned by the following characteristics: it should be recognised, and respected, as an emotional experience; it serves to enhance a democratic good as well as individual gain (e.g., for learning and teaching in HE); it is built on notions of trust and responsibility; it supports professional development; it engenders an ethic of reciprocity; and it is committed to enabling genuine dialogue through methods of dialogue *for* education (where difference is inherent to meaning making).

We are confident that today's academics and students, working under the usual pressures and limitations and under the capacious roof of 'student engagement', can develop a space where this is possible. However, our focus as academics must shift from designing institutional infrastructures of 'collaboration' to developing and nurturing student and staff relationships of 'collegiality'.

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